

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 350

CE 082 362

AUTHOR Kerka, Sandra
TITLE Youth Councils and Career Development. Trends and Issues Alert No. 27.
INSTITUTION ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, Columbus, OH.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE 2001-00-00
NOTE 4p.
CONTRACT ED-99-CO-0013
AVAILABLE FROM For full text: <http://www.ericacve.org/fulltext.asp>.
PUB TYPE ERIC Publications (071) -- Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Development; Career Education; *Education Work Relationship; Educationally Disadvantaged; Federal Legislation; *High Risk Students; *Individual Development; Leadership Training; Low Income Groups; Postsecondary Education; Potential Dropouts; Secondary Education; Self Destructive Behavior; Service Learning; Services; Work Experience Programs; *Youth Programs
IDENTIFIERS *Workforce Investment Act 1998; Workforce Investment Boards; *Youth Councils

ABSTRACT

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA) requires Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to establish Youth Councils as a sub-group focused on low-income youth at risk, ages 14-21, who face barriers to school completion. Youth Councils present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive employment and training system. The WIA's vision of a comprehensive system has 10 essential elements that contribute to life/career development, including work experience, leadership development, counseling and support of caring adults and peers, meaningful connections to education and employment, community service, and sustained follow-up support. The challenge for Youth Councils is not to continue existing patterns of resource allocation, but to seize the opportunity to help youth at risk avoid self-destructive behaviors, develop skills, and build personal and professional support systems for their future careers. (Contains 19 resources that provide guidance for establishing Youth Councils and developing programs.) (YLB)

**Youth Councils and Career Development
Trends and Issues Alert No. 27**

Sandra Kerka

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ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education
Center on Education and Training for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus, OH 43210-1090

Youth Councils and Career Development

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 requires Workforce Investment Boards (WIBs) to establish Youth Councils as a subgroup focused on low-income youth at risk, ages 14-21, who face barriers to school completion. Youth Councils present an opportunity to develop a comprehensive employment and training system that differs from earlier efforts narrowly focused on job training (Brown 1999). Research and practice experiences affirm the need for a broader focus for career development: in addition to information, guidance, academic preparation, and work-readiness skills, youth need life skills that enable them to become healthy, productive citizens. "The WIA's emphasis on youth development encourages the work force system to treat youth as developing beings, for whom getting a job is not the only adult behavior they must master" (Youth Can Work! 1999, p. 15). The WIA's vision of a comprehensive system has 10 essential elements that contribute to life/career development, including work experience, leadership development, counseling and support of caring adults and peers, meaningful connections to education and employment, community service, and sustained follow-up support.

If Youth Councils are to achieve the goal of comprehensive life and career development, a major issue must be addressed (Callahan and Pines 1999; Kazis 2001): Will their approach be minimalist, acting as the WIB's advisor on youth issues—the minimum role required by law? Or will they serve as the "WIB's architect of a comprehensive youth service delivery system" (Callahan and Pines 1999, p. 21), bringing together the multiple and fragmented funding streams and agencies that currently deliver some piece of the whole. Another issue is how and whether Youth Councils will integrate with existing school-to-work infrastructures and incorporate career development lessons from School-to-Work Opportunities Act (STWOA) projects (Kazis 2001; Spangler 1999). The challenge is not to continue existing patterns of resource allocation, but to seize the opportunity to help youth at risk avoid self-destructive behaviors, develop skills, and build personal and professional support systems for their future careers. The following resources provide guidance for establishing Youth Councils and developing programs.

Resources

Beaulieu, L. J. *Improving Job Opportunities for Low-Income People: The Hope of the Workforce Investment Act of 1998*. Mississippi State, MS: Southern Rural Development Center, 1999. (ED 433 164) www.ext.msstate.edu/srdc/publications/reform08.htm

Gives an overview of the role, responsibilities, and activities of Youth Councils. Outlines roles for university extension, given their expertise in 4-H youth development and youth leadership programming.

Brown, D. E. *Advancing Youth Development under the Workforce Investment Act*. Washington, DC: National Youth Employment Coalition, 1999. www.nyec.org/yd&wia.htm

Outlines principles of youth development that are reflected in the WIA, summarizes many of the key youth provisions of the act, and details how states can promote the fuller incorporation of the youth development principles advanced by the new legislation.

Callahan, J., and Pines, M. *WIA Youth Policy Councils: Key to the Future for a Generation of Challenge*. Baltimore, MD: Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University, 1999. www.levitan.org/sumwiayouth.html

This guide for local leaders describes how they might address the challenges of forming Youth Councils. It discusses the WIA, how to leverage resources to build a youth development system, and the state role in Youth Councils. Case studies of existing councils describe how they were formed, what obstacles they faced, and what they have accomplished to date.

Campbell, D. R., and Marquez-Perez, C. "Strategies for Recruitment, Training, Participation and Retention of Youth Council Members." Roundtable discussion, Regional Youth Council Meeting, Grand Junction, Colorado, March 29, 2001. www.state.co.us/gov_dir/wdc/YouthCouncil/piton.doc

Discusses what is known about involving youth effectively, questions to consider before engaging youth, mentoring, youth retreats, ideas to implement once youth have been engaged, and retention strategies.

Fleegler, R. *School-to-Work Partnerships and Youth Councils. School-to-Work Intermediary Project. Issue Brief*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future; San Francisco, CA: New Ways Workers National; Washington, DC: National School-to-Work Opportunities Office, 1999. (ED 444 023) www.jff.org/youthcouncils.pdf; www.intermediarynetwork.org/pdf/youthcouncils.pdf

Individuals interested in influencing local WIA youth program implementation should take the following steps: (1) encourage elected officials to appoint individuals well versed in youth employment/youth development to the local WIB; (2) encourage a full range of key stakeholders to participate on the Youth Council, including K-12 and postsecondary education; (3) build broad-based local coalitions from the bottom up; and (4) encourage development of Youth Councils that embrace a mission that includes youth employment/youth development system building rather than just the dispensing of WIA formula funds.

Kazis, R. *Youth Councils and Comprehensive Youth Planning: A Report from Eight Communities. School-to-Work Intermediary Project Issue Brief*. Boston, MA: Jobs for the Future, 2001. www.intermediarynetwork.org/pdf/youth%20planning.pdf

This assessment of the early progress of eight Youth Councils depicts their evolution, approaches they are using to promote comprehensive youth service planning and programs, challenges they have faced, and practical lessons. Concludes that many are trying to move beyond the mandated planning and monitoring role to a more comprehensive approach to coordinating and planning community responses to youth needs. Includes the Framework for Youth Council Development in Massachusetts developed by the Commonwealth Corporation.

Pines, M., and Callahan, J. *Recipes for Success: Youth Council Guide to Creating a Youth Development System under WIA. Technical Assistance and Training Materials for Youth Councils*. New Brunswick, NJ: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University; Baltimore, MD: Sar Levitan Center for Social Policy Studies, Johns Hopkins University; Washington, DC: National Youth Employment Coalition, 2000. (ED 445 219) usworkforce.org/resources/pdf/recipes-ycouncil.pdf

This guide includes a work plan; description of the wide range of Youth Council responsibilities, from organization and staffing to strategic planning and accountability; resource allocation decisions,

follow-up services, the performance system, selection of service providers, and other important administrative decisions; and pathways to comprehensive service delivery that are based on proven principles and practices.

Spangler, D. *Workforce Investment Act Youth Provisions and School-to-Work Opportunities: A Context for Collaboration*. Washington, DC: National School-to-Work Opportunities Office, 1999. www.stwo.gov/Database/Subject2.cfm?RECNO=4623

Discusses the WIA's youth provisions, issues of mutual concern in the STWOA and WIA, key issues for WIA youth implementation and potential support from the STWOA (defining youth-oriented work, building collaboration between councils and schools to improve the performance of WIA-eligible students, building year-round programs providing school year and summer activities, engaging employers and union), challenges to collaboration, and early experiences connecting WIA youth and STW activities in selected sites.

Strumpf, L. *Ten Things for Youth Councils to Build Active and Engaged Youth Councils*. 2001. www.nyatep.org/tenforyouthcouncils.html

Lists do's and don'ts for effective council meetings and activities.

Technical Assistance to Workforce Investment Act Youth Councils. Boston, MA: Center for Youth Development and Education, Commonwealth Corporation, 2001. www.comcorp.org/CYDE/WIA/tools.htm

Includes downloadable versions of the following: Youth Services Survey instrument, Twenty-Five Questions that Describe the Condition of Youth, and Strategic Priorities assessment tool.

Workforce Investment Act of 1998. Washington, DC: Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 1998. (ED 425 334). *WIA Interim Final Rule Youth Councils*. usworkforce.org/resources/rule-youth.htm

The law mandating Youth Councils and the Final Regulations from the Federal Register, April 15, 1999.

The Workforce Investment Act of 1998: A Vision for Youth. Oregon: Linn, Benton, and Lincoln County Workforce Investment Board, 2001. www.region4wib.org/youth.htm

Outlines key expectations of the legislation. Describes Youth Councils' role as a catalyst for systemic reform. Discusses youth services in the one-stop system.

YC Works. www.lrginc.org/etayouth/ycworks.html

Newsletter produced by the ETA Youth Council Network, a partnership of the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration/Office of Youth Services, the National Office of Job Corps, and the Leonard Resource Group, Inc.

Youth Can Work!: Chartering Youth Councils under the WIA. New Brunswick, NJ: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, 1999. www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/publications/ACF615E.pdf

This primer will help WIB and Youth Council members understand the requirements, responsibilities, and opportunities of youth councils; understand the balance between the concepts of youth employment and youth development required under WIA; understand and use best practices in many areas of employment, training, and youth development; and develop new resources and support for Youth Councils.

"Youth Council Idea Exchange Days." Albany: New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, 2001. www.nyatep.org/youthideasummary.html

Provides examples and ideas for collaborating with business and education, developing a proposal, retaining youth on the Youth Council and in programs, collaborating with program operators, and addressing future technical assistance needs.

Youth Council Toolkit. Information and Options for Forming Councils under the Workforce Investment Act. Albany: New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, 1999. www.nyatep.org/youthtoolkit.pdf

Covers legal and regulatory requirements, scope of work, membership and council models; provides planning and implementation worksheets. Appendices contain a list of websites, sections of the WIA and interim regulations, and sample forms (council member nominations, memorandum of understanding, bylaws).

Youth Council Training Modules. New Brunswick, NJ: John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development, Rutgers University, 2000. www.heldrich.rutgers.edu/youth/new2.cfm?id=27; www.usworkforce.org/resources/training.htm

Modules include (1) Youth Councils—the challenge; (2) building a youth development system in your community; (3) strategic planning for Youth Councils; (4) effective youth programs and practices; and (5) accountability. Handouts include worksheet for identifying council members, self-assessment for council membership, strategies to keep council members active and engaged, youth resource scan, and planning template.

Youth Councils. Youth and WIA Briefing Paper no. 3. Albany: New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals, 2000. www.nyatep.org/stwbrie3.html

Results of an informal survey to several local employment and training directors regarding the implementation of Youth Councils that identified emerging trends in council development.

"Youth Leadership Summit. Region 1/New York." Washington, DC: Office of Youth Services, U.S. Department of Labor, July 2001. www.doleta.gov/youth_services/ny-youth-summit.asp

Presents the rationale and agenda of an overnight youth retreat for youth who are being considered for Youth Council involvement in New Jersey. The activities include team building and group projects that stimulate thinking and problem-solving skills and develop employability skills.

"Youth/Youth Council Resources." Washington, DC: Employment and Training Administration, U.S. Department of Labor, 2001. www.usworkforce.org/resources/youth.htm

Includes links to Youth Opportunity Movement, Youth Opportunity Grants 2000, Youth Councils resources, Laws and Regulations, WIA Planning and Implementation, Education, Youth Training.

This project has been funded at least in part with Federal funds from the U.S. Department of Education under Contract No. ED-99-CO-0013. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. Trends and Issues Alerts may be freely reproduced and are available at <http://etiacave.org/fulltext.asp>.



Center on Education and Training
for Employment
College of Education
The Ohio State University
1900 Kenny Road
Columbus OH 43210-1080